



Department of Justice

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Southern District of Indiana**

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HOGSETT ANNOUNCES MORE RESULTS IN LOCAL EFFORT AGAINST GUN CRIME

Indianapolis "armed career criminal" sentenced as part of Violent Crime Initiative

PRESS RELEASE

INDIANAPOLIS – Joseph H. Hogsett, the United States Attorney, announced today that Byron Pierson, age 34, of Indianapolis, was sentenced to 180 months (15 years) in federal prison this morning by U.S. District Judge Sarah Evans Barker. Pierson agreed to plead guilty to charges that were brought as part of the U.S. Attorney's Violent Crime Initiative, admitting that he illegally possessed firearms as a convicted felon.

"Two years ago, this Office pledged to federally prosecute more illegally-armed felons than ever before," Hogsett said. "Our success in that effort has been due to cases like this – collaborative investigations targeting armed career criminals who view our local jails as their personal revolving door."

On May 31, 2011, Indianapolis Metropolitan Police Department Officer William Hornaday was searching for the defendant, Byron Pierson, on the city's Eastside. At the time, Pierson had a number of active warrants related to pending state charges. Officer Hornaday was near the residence of Pierson's wife when he observed a blue Chevy Camaro approach. Officer Hornaday recognized Pierson as the driver, initiated a traffic stop, and ordered the defendant to show his hands and exit the vehicle.

Pierson then opened the driver's side door, pushed Officer Hornaday backward, and ran from the scene. As Pierson fled, IMPD Officer Joel Keller walked to the vehicle and observed a Hi Point 9mm handgun, which Pierson had placed under the floor mat before fleeing from the police. Pierson was later apprehended and arrested.

All told, Pierson's extensive criminal history in Marion County includes 19 local arrests since 1993. Among those were five felony convictions on charges that included robbery, dealing cocaine, resisting law enforcement, and possessing a firearm as a serious violent felon.

In sentencing Pierson, Judge Barker identified him as an armed career criminal (ACC), a designation that carries with it a mandatory minimum of 15 years in federal prison. The ACC category is a federal-specific prosecutorial tool, and Hogsett said the sentencing enhancement was a key component of the office's efforts to assist local law enforcement combat violent crime.

This prosecution comes as part of the U.S. Attorney's Violent Crime Initiative (VCI), and is the result of collaborative investigative efforts by the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, as well as the Indianapolis Metropolitan Police Department.

Launched in March 2011, the VCI has produced a dramatic increase in the number of gun-related charges brought federally – from just 14 charges in 2010 to more than 110 in 2011. In 2012, there were more than 160 firearms-related charges filed as part of the Violent Crime Initiative. More than half of the prosecutions under the VCI have been of Marion County defendants, who collectively represent more than 400 prior felonies in the Indianapolis area.

According to Special Assistant U.S. Attorney Andrea Props and First Assistant U.S. Attorney Josh Minkler, who together prosecuted the case for the government, Judge Barker also imposed 5 years supervised release following Pierson's release from prison.

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